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UNCLAS DJIBOUTI 001382

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: REPORT OF TERRORIST CAPTURED AND HANDED OVER TO SOMALILAND

1. (U) Summary: The international Saudi newspaper Al Sharq Al Awsat reported on October 25th that the brainchild of the latest series of European aid workers killings in Somaliland has been caught. The Somali terrorist, who is said to be an activist of Al Ittihad Al Islamiya, a terror group linked to Al Qaeda, was caught in Ethiopia and the Ethiopian authorities handed him over to the self-proclaimed Government of Somaliland. Both the Al Sharq Al-Awsat and BBC Somali reports claim the U.S Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa based in Djibouti, participated in the extradition operation. End Summary.

2. (U) On October 25th the London based Saudi newspaper reported a press conference given by the Somaliland Minister of Interior, Ismail Adam Osman, who stated that there are new developments in the cases of European aid workers killed in Somaliland in late 2003 and early 2004. The minister stated that Ethiopian forces has handed over a Somali national suspected to be behind a number of terrorist operations that took place in Somaliland. The man called "Mohamed Ali Issa" is suspected to have arranged the assassination of one Kenyan national and one German national, working in the German non-governmental organization "GTZ" in early 2004 and the killing of two British teachers in the Somaliland city of "Sheikh" in October 2003. The minister said in his statement to the press, "the suspect fled to Mogadishu, he was caught there and sustained injuries to his leg during the pursuit. He was moved to Djibouti to get necessary medical treatment. After that the Ethiopian forces handed the suspect to us." The report did not indicate if the minister identified those who arrested the suspected murderer.

3. (U) Al Sharq Al-Awsat also reported information gathered from Somali news sources, which allege that CJTF- HOA, described as U.S counter-terrorist forces based in Djibouti, aided in the capture of Mohamed Ali Issa. The press conference reported that Somaliland authorities have indicted Al Ittihad Al Islamia (AIAI) and Al Qaeda networks for being responsible for the assassinations. The Minister continued that ten people have now been arrested in Hargeisa under the same charges and are waiting trial. Al Sharq Al Awsat ended its report by reminding that AIAI has been designated as a terrorist organization by the United States after the 9/11 events and considers it as Al Qaeda's arm in the Horn of Africa region.